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SUBJECT: DPRK FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS HANOI: NO FIRM PLAN
FOR KIM JONG-IL VISIT

REF: A. HANOI 869

[¶](#)B. 07 HANOI 1901

[¶](#)C. 07 HANOI 1804

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Classified By: Pol Counselor Brian Aggeler for Reasons 1.4 (B and D)

[¶](#)11. (C) Summary: On July 26, DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun held official meetings in Hanoi with Communist Party of Vietnam General Secretary Nong Duc Manh and Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem. The two Vietnamese leaders reportedly told their North Korean guest that Hanoi wants to strengthen ties with the DPRK and welcomes progress in the six-party talks. According to MFA, Pyongyang is unwilling to seriously open up its economy until its relations with Washington improve. General Secretary Manh reportedly asked Chun to reiterate his invitation to Kim Jong-Il to visit Vietnam. ROK Embassy Poloff, however, said Chun's visit did not make "meaningful progress" in getting Kim Jong-Il to come here. Developing stronger economic linkages between the two communist countries and more high-level exchanges would increase the chances the "Dear Leader" would visit Hanoi, according to the ROK Embassy officer. While relations between Vietnam and North Korea took a hit in 2004 after the GVN allowed hundreds of North Korean refugees to resettle in South Korea, relations between the two communist countries now appear to be warming considerably. End Summary.

A Traditional Friendship

[¶](#)12. (SBU) After attending the ASEAN Regional Forum in Singapore, DPRK Foreign Minister (FM) Pak Ui Chun paid an official visit to Hanoi July 25-27 before going on to the Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial in Tehran. In Hanoi Chun met with Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) General Secretary (GS) Nong Duc Manh and Deputy Prime Minister (DPM)/Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem. His first visit to Vietnam since becoming Foreign Minister, Chun also took time to visit Hanoi's Temple of Literature, a cultural site significant to Vietnam. Chun's visit follows the late June visit to Vietnam by DPRK Security Minister Ju Sang Son and the late 2007 visit by DPRK Prime Minister Kim Jong-Il.

[¶](#)13. (C) Vietnamese MFA Korea Division Head Nguyen An Duy told Poloff that the high-level exchanges are part of overall efforts, as agreed by the two sides during GS Manh's meetings in Pyongyang in 2007, to increase and regularize exchanges at "all levels and across ministries." Duy said Manh told Chun that Hanoi wants to strengthen the "traditional friendship" with the DPRK and welcomes progress in the six-party talks and the DPRK's signing of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Manh repeated the invitation for "Dear Leader" Kim Jong-Il to visit Vietnam, which the FM promised to relay to the DPRK leader upon his return home, Duy stated. Duy added that, for his part, Chun praised Vietnam's industrial

achievements and its rising stature in world affairs. Despite reports of famine in North Korea, the FM did not request any food aid, Duy said.

Assessing DPRK Reform Prospects

¶ 14. (C) In response to FM Chun's questions about Hanoi's experiences in normalizing relations with Washington, DPM/FM Khiem merely cited "guiding principles" by which the process with the United States took place, Duy said. Hanoi remains willing to share its experiences in opening up its economy and in joining the world's organizations, but North Korean thinking is "very different from Vietnamese thinking," Duy stressed. He said that, in Hanoi's assessment, the North Korean regime is more concerned about losing power than it is about loss of face because it is presiding over a backward country. Hanoi sees Pyongyang as unwilling to seriously open up its economy until its relations with Washington improve, Duy said.

¶ 15. (C) When asked about the Joint Statement issued during President Nguyen Minh Triet's official visit to Tokyo last year, Duy emphasized that the statement only committed Tokyo and Hanoi to responding to the "international community's" humanitarian and security concerns. Hanoi accepts Pyongyang's explanation that the issue of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korean agents was resolved when Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi was in charge, Duy declared. He stressed that Hanoi will not press Pyongyang on the abduction issue and the DPRK and Japanese Governments "have their own channels" on this issue. According to a Japanese Embassy Poloff, however, during his July 26 talks in Hanoi Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura had indeed requested that his Vietnamese hosts broach the abduction issue with the DPRK

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Foreign Minister.

The View from the ROK Embassy

¶ 16. (C) ROK Embassy Poloff Jeong Woo-Jin said Chun told his Vietnamese hosts that the DPRK is "not happy" about the current state of relations between the two Koreas. Chun asserted in his talks here that improving the relationship between the two Koreas depends on the ROK side, according to Woo-Jin.

¶ 17. (C) Before Chun arrived in Hanoi, "working level" officials from the two sides had arranged rice donations from Vietnam, Woo-Jin continued. Moreover, the North Korean side had asked Hanoi to say the latter offered the rice, not that the DPRK had requested it, Woo-Jin said. He agreed that Chun seemed interested in Hanoi's normalization process with Washington. In Woo-Jin's assessment, this shows that some North Korean officials are thinking Pyongyang might begin negotiations with the USG.

¶ 18. (C) As for a possible visit to Hanoi by "Dear Leader" Kim Jong-Il, Chun's visit did not make "much meaningful progress" on this front, Woo-Jin asserted. He pointed out that no specific dates have been mentioned. Furthermore, when the Vietnamese Vice Minister of Trade and Industry visits North Korea later this month, Hanoi and Pyongyang will explore ways to develop their weak economic ties, Woo-Jin said. He concluded that improved economic linkages would increase the chances that the "Dear Leader" would visit Vietnam.

Comment: Setting An Example, But Not Preaching

¶ 19. (C) Relations between Vietnam and North Korea took a hit in 2004 after Hanoi allowed hundreds of North Korean refugees to relocate to South Korea. At that time, the DPRK pulled its Ambassador in protest. That low-point now seems a

distant memory as the two sides have kept up a steady stream of high-level exchanges, though leaders from the two sides do not have many economic linkages to tout. GS Manh has taken the lead for the Vietnamese side in dealing with North Korean officials mainly because of his successful visit to Pyongyang in late 2007. Pictures of the GS meetings with Kim Jong-Il adorn a billboard in front of the DPRK Embassy. Vietnamese officials, however, remain careful not to lecture their North Korean friends about the benefits of opening up to the outside world.

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